

DECEMBER 4, 1992

JAN 20 1993

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

RE: P.R.C., 1835 E. 29th ST., SIGNAL HILL, CA 90806

This is from a concerned citizen who knows enough about this situation to be able to see when a case has been handled unjustly. This company in question did in fact pump highly laced P.C.B. oil underground from their plant through an abandoned pipeline below Spring Street and into an unpermitted tank in an abandoned refinery, which is illegal according to the E.P.A. This was suspiciously done at night.

After admitting no contest in court, which basically means they are guilty, they received a meager fine of \$60,000 and no criminal sentence. This case is completely unjustified and definitely should be reopened. Apparently, the CAL-E.P.A. and the Long Beach judge did not go by the E.P.A. and D.O.H.S. rule book, Title 22. Now with this sentence, they are letting everybody know that you can do anything illegal, using stall tactics, pay-offs, and bribery, and still get away with a crime.

As the saying goes, "Its not WHAT you know, its WHO you know", which is obvious in this case.

If this case is not further investigated and this complaint is ignored, then in the near future we will anonymously alert the media about this negligence of public environmental safety.

FROM A VERY CONCERNED CITIZEN

# Oil Recycling Firm Faces Criminal Charges

■ **Environment:** D.A. claims that hazardous waste was illegally stored at abandoned refinery site.

## LONG BEACH AREA

By RICK HOLGUIN  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The district attorney's office has filed criminal charges against a Signal Hill oil recycling company, alleging that the firm illegally stored more than 175,000 gallons of hazardous oil waste in a tank at an abandoned oil refinery in Long Beach.

Petroleum Recycling Corp. will be arraigned Feb. 19 in Long Beach Municipal Court on one felony count of illegally storing hazardous waste and one misdemeanor count of storing hazardous waste without a permit, said Deputy Dist. Atty. Joseph P. Charney, who is prosecuting the case.

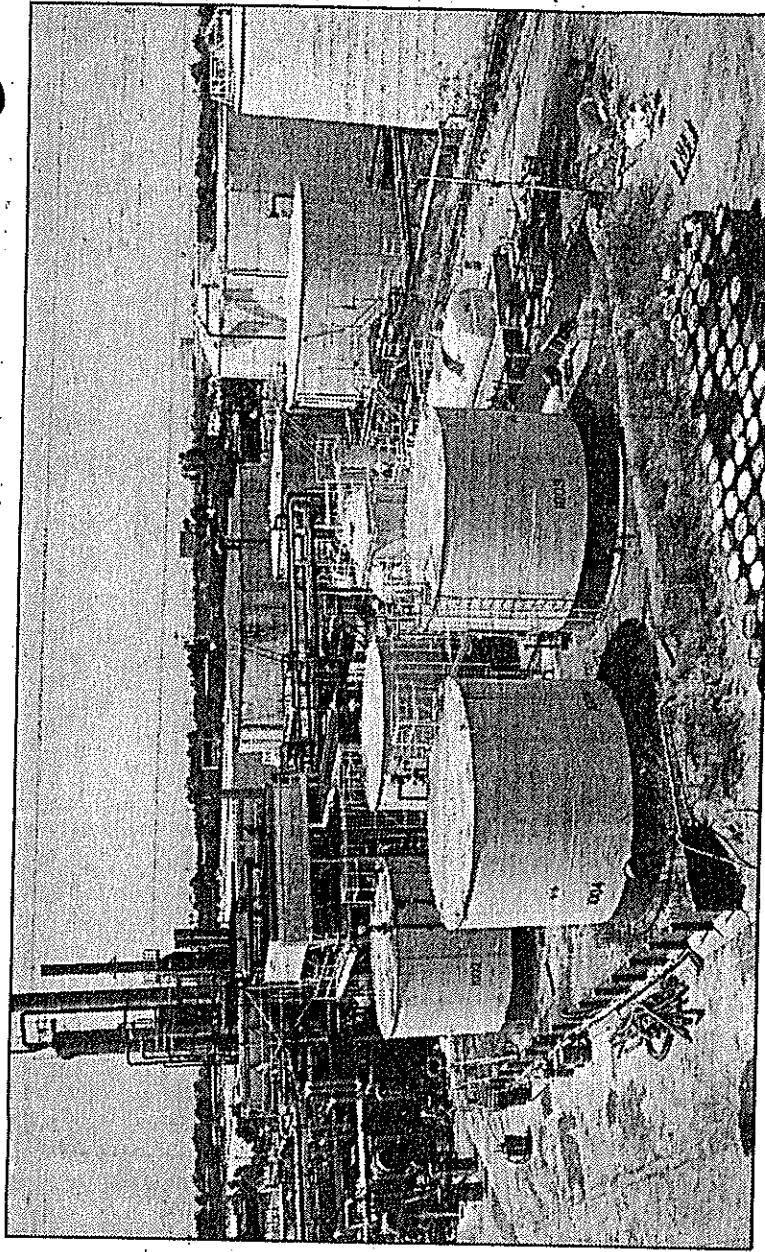
If convicted on both counts, Petroleum Recycling Corp. faces fines of up to \$100,000 a day for each day the waste was illegally stored. Charney said he also will seek to force the firm to remove and dispose of the waste, which is flammable and contains cancer-causing PCBs.

"They are in violation of using that facility for a lengthy period of time," Charney said.

He said records show that Petroleum Recycling Corp. used underground pipelines to transport waste to and from the abandoned refinery, known as Wright Terminals, from the summer of 1989 through the summer of 1990.

An official for Petroleum Recycling Corp. said the firm is innocent of any wrongdoing but declined to discuss specifics of the case.

"Our attorney's opinion is we were operating legally," company



RICK CORRALES / Los Angeles Times

State officials say it will take years to finish cleaning up the abandoned Wright Terminals refinery.

Vice President Gary Leger said. "One of the great unanswered questions in the whole thing is who put what in that tank? We don't believe that anything that's in that tank currently . . . has anything to do with us."

Petroleum Recycling Corp. recycles waste oil at 2651 Walnut Ave., a stone's throw from Wright Terminals. The abandoned refinery is near Cherry Avenue and Spring Street, surrounded by light industry and bordered by the San Diego Freeway (405).

Petroleum Recycling Corp. never had a permit to use Wright Terminals as a storage facility for its waste, Charney said.

The more than 175,000 gallons of liquid waste contains cancer-causing PCBs and will probably have to be removed by a hazardous-waste hauler, officials said.

Wright Terminals has been an environmental headache ever since Wright Cos. of Las Vegas, Nev., declared bankruptcy and abandoned the site last year.

State and city health officials have been working to clean up the site.

Last month, more than 1.7 million gallons of liquid oil waste were removed from more than 20 tanks on the site for recycling.

What remains is the waste that allegedly came from Petroleum Recycling Corp., oil sludge at the bottom of storage tanks, and about 250 55-gallon drums, some of which contain hazardous waste. Several small piles of oil-tainted soil also are at the site.

State officials say it will be several years before the site is cleaned up. The ground at the site is tainted, and past tests have indicated that there is at least some ground-water contamination.

The former Western Oil Refinery was last operated as a bulk-fuel storage and blending terminal by Wright Cos., which went into bankruptcy and was liquidated.

The bankruptcy trustee in the case said all assets would go to the main creditor of Wright Cos.—Marine Midland Business Loans Inc.—and there would be no money for the cleanup. A judge declared the site abandoned last May.

Officials hope they can find a developer who would be willing to pay for the cleanup in order to build on the site.

# Abandoned Refinery Tanks Are Drained in Toxic Cleanup

■ **Pollution:** Petroleum Recycling has pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor charge of illegally disposing of hazardous waste at Wright Terminals.

## LONG BEACH

By RICK HOLGUIN  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The last of the huge tanks that held petroleum waste at an abandoned oil refinery in Long Beach has been drained, eliminating the danger of large spills or an explosion, officials said.

"There is no imminent danger to people living around the site," said Rich Varenchik, a spokesman for the California Environmental Protection Agency.

The final 200,000 gallons of oil-tainted water were drained last month from a tank at the abandoned refinery, known as Wright Terminals, near Cherry Avenue and Spring Street. The site is surrounded by light industry and the San Diego Freeway (405).

The cleanup was the result of a criminal investigation and prosecution of a Signal Hill oil recycler, Petroleum Recycling Corp. Officials alleged that the company illegally piped the waste into a tank at Wright Terminals.

Petroleum Recycling pleaded no contest Tuesday in Long Beach Superior Court to a misdemeanor charge of illegally disposing of hazardous waste at Wright Terminals. The company also agreed to pay \$60,000 in fines.

Judge Richard F. Charyat closed the case after hearing testimony that the firm had properly disposed of the waste.

Company Vice President Gary Leger said Wednesday that Petroleum Recycling

Please see REFINERY, J10

# REFINERY: Wright Terminals Cleanup

Continued from J1

Corp. spent more than \$100,000 to clean the tank.

"We still vehemently maintain that we didn't put that material in here," Leger said. "But we're happy to have it resolved and over with."

Deputy Dist. Atty. Joseph P. Charney, who prosecuted the case, said the outcome was successful because the tank was drained of potentially flammable waste at no expense to taxpayers.

"We're happy that the tank is cleaned up and there's no more anger from it," Charney said.

More than 1.7 million gallons of hazardous waste was removed earlier this year from other tanks at the abandoned refinery.

Minor amounts of petroleum products in the bottom of the tanks and in pipelines on the site still need to be removed, said Jim Ross, senior engineer for the state's Regional Water Quality Control

Board, which is overseeing the cleanup.

In addition, the ground at the site is tainted, and past tests have indicated at least some ground water is contaminated to a depth of 85 feet, officials said.

More testing is needed to determine the extent of the contamination, they said.

Ross said he has begun discussions with the out-of-state owner of the site, Robert Zander, to get him to pay to demolish the rusting refinery and clean up the site. Officials hope the work will begin next year.

The former Western Oil Refinery was last operated as a bulk-fuel storage and blending terminal by Wright Cos. of Las Vegas, Nev., which leased the five-acre property from Zander. Wright Cos. declared bankruptcy and abandoned the site in 1991.

CalEPA took control of the site in May, 1991, citing a threat of explosion from fumes emanating

from storage tanks. CalEPA has spent about \$200,000 on the site, Varenchik said.

But state and local officials have also been aggressive in finding ways to clean the site without spending public funds.

The first breakthrough in the effort came in September, 1991, when state and local officials announced that they had reached an agreement with a local company to remove more than 1.7 million gallons of oil-tainted water from about 20 storage tanks on the site.

Paramount Petroleum Corp. had no previous involvement with Wright Terminals, but the firm had violated clean-air regulations at its plant with excessive emissions and odors. It absorbed the cost of removing and recycling the waste from the tanks. In exchange, the South Coast Air Quality Management District forgave about \$200,000 in fines that were to be levied against the firm for the violations.

## **SIGNAL HILL**

# **Oil Recycler Pleads No Contest to Illegal Storage**

A Signal Hill oil recycling company pleaded no contest Tuesday to a misdemeanor charge of illegally storing about 100,000 gallons of oil-laden waste water at an abandoned Long Beach refinery and paid \$60,000 in fines.

Superior Court Judge Richard F. Charvat closed the case against Petroleum Recycling Corp. after hearing testimony that the firm had removed and properly disposed of the waste in a tank

at Wright Terminals in Long Beach, said Deputy Dist. Atty. Joseph P. Charney.

The former refinery and bulk-fuel storage terminal was abandoned last year, and local and state health officials have been working to clean up environmental hazards at the Spring Street site.

Virtually all of the liquid waste in the tanks of the old refinery has been removed, said Jim Ross, senior engineer with the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, which is overseeing the cleanup.

Demolition of the old refinery and testing for soil and ground water contamination is expected to take place next year, he said.